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Smith Hempstone: Destabilizing the CIA

The furor aroused by revelation of the Central Intelligence Agency's activities in Chile raises a number of interesting questions:

- Was the CIA responsible for the overthrow and death of Marxist President Salvador Allende?
- Should the United States get out of covert activities?
- How much candor can be expected from officials testifying before congressional committees?

AS TO THE first, any government that can be "destabilized" for \$11 million, less than many American cities spend for snow removal, and about a quarter of what the Soviet Union has pumped into Portugal since April, can hardly enjoy much popular support, which Allende's did not. He was elected with barely more than a third of the popular vote. He was overthrown, as Charles W. Yost, former U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, has observed, "because he and his more radical adherents alienated, frightened, and ultimately radicalized in the opposite sense the unconverted majority, particularly its most powerful element, the military."

Allende fell and died from the weight of his own incompetence and extremism. The disagreeable nature of the regime that succeeded him is itself indicative of Allende's immoderation. The totalitarianism of the left inevitably breeds the authoritarianism of the right, and vice versa.

Indeed, the \$11 million that the CIA spread around to bribe politicians and finance the opposition press undoubtedly was far less damaging to Allende than the perfectly justifiable withholding from him on American insistence of loans from the World Bank, Inter-American Development Bank and the Export-Import Bank. Unless one is prepared to argue that, with Cuba's DGI agents pumping money and guns into Chile, the United States had an obligation to assist in the perpetuation of a regime whose apparent ultimate objective was the subversion of democratic institutions.

As to the second question, there are those who maintain that a democratic nation cannot indulge in international dirty tricks and remain true to itself. That notion is defensible philosophically, but it has very

little to do with the real and brutal world in which we live. To leave the field of covert operations to totalitarians of the left and right would be to deny ourselves one means of defending our national security.

AS CIA DIRECTOR William Colby has put it, to completely rule out covert activities would "leave us with nothing between a diplomatic protest and sending in the Marines."

A stronger case can be made for the proposition that covert operations should be employed only against Communist and neo-fascist regimes that are not duly elected, as Allende's was. By such reasoning, the United States would have had to wait until Allende's thugs had totally subverted the Chilean constitution before moving against them.

As to the third question, the conflict between an official's duty not to reveal highly classified information — which almost certainly can be expected to turn up in tomorrow's newspaper — and his clear obligation to tell the truth when testifying under oath is apparent. Given the temper of the times, a refusal to comment on grounds of na-

tional security risks a contempt citation and is taken as an admission of guilt. Nevertheless, that has to be preferable to lying.

Probably the subcommittees of the Senate and House Armed Services committees that oversee the CIA's secret activities ought to tighten their procedures and be a little more skeptical of the agency's activities of this nature, which in any event are declining in both number and scope (and while they're at it, they ought to see to it if there's anything that can be done to keep at least a few secrets from showing up over the morning orange juice).

WITH THE BENEFIT of hindsight, it is probable that the decision to spend \$11 million to "destabilize" Chile was unwise. Given the nature of the present regime in Santiago, it may even have been immoral.

But that doesn't mean we should give up all covert operations.

The people of Czechoslovakia, Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia — to name but a handful — would dearly love to see their governments "destabilized."

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